

## At the Sanctuary - September, 2014

Robyn Howard

The music captivated me. The sounds, the songs, the rhythms.

I had arrived with a specific task in mind and was determined to achieve it. I did succeed, but I could not close my ears.

There was so much variety – the sweet rising notes of the Golden Whistler followed by lusty territorial calls; the grating, rasping buzzing of the Spectacled Monarch; the flamboyant songs of the Brown Honeyeaters; the raucous chattering and screeching of the Rainbow Lorikeets; the carolling duet of the Australian Magpies; the whispering sounds of the Red-browed Finches; the soft sound of something hopping through the leaf litter of the forest, then the tossing of leaves. An explosive whip-crack announced that it was probably the Eastern Whipbird who was to blame.

The Bar-shouldered Doves constantly called “wucoo, wucoo”, and the choir of Scarlet Honeyeaters continued their recurring seven note melody. The rollicking chorusing of the Grey Butcherbirds echoed in the eucalypts, as the Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes flew overhead with their distinctive scratchy churring.

In the Melaleuca Forest, the Striped Marsh Frog beat its slow rhythm – “toc . . toc . . toc . . toc . .” – and something small rustled through the Mangrove Ferns chasing insects. Maybe it was the White-browed Scrubwrens with their scolding “clucks”, or even those sopranos, the Rufous Fantails, but the insects still were obvious with their stridulations.

All the while, the sibilant sounds of the gentle breeze in the leaves of the canopy made a soft accompaniment. Harmonious liquid piping from Grey and Little Shrike-thrushes soothed the spirit, while the ringing notes of the Eastern Yellow Robin demanded attention. The rising “whoop” of the Brown Cuckoo-Dove continued rhythmically in the background.

Down near the river, the gentle lapping of the water was a contrast to the “gunshot crack” of the Pistol Shrimp from its burrow. The mellow gurgling “orry-orry-ole” of the Olive-backed Oriole was most pleasing, while the “kick...kick.....kick...kick.....” signalled that the Collared Kingfisher had reclaimed his territory along the river bank.

When I returned later in the month, I took the time to watch the Major Skink in the garden, and the Eastern Water Skink on a fallen casuarina trunk. They normally disappear as soon as I even think of my camera, but this fellow, so well camouflaged, continued to enjoy the warmth of the sun.

Closer to the Information Centre, a pair of Willy Wagtails were feeding their tiny young in a well-concealed, beautifully constructed nest.

Incidentally, the Wonga Vine (*Pandorea pandorana*) is in heavy bloom in the rainforest canopy, the white flowers easily visible from the concrete walkway.



Willy Wagtail brooding



Eastern Water Skink



Brown Cuckoo-Dove – female



Collared Kingfisher – in casuarina near the river



Wonga Vine (*Pandorea pandoranus*)